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A PICKWICKIAN PILGRIMAGE

JOHN R. G. HASSARD

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PICKWICKIAN PILGRIMAGE

BY

JOHN R. G. HASSARD

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1881

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PREFACE.

THIS little book is made out of letters published in "The New York Tribune" in the summer of 1879. A few paragraphs have been added here and there, and other slight changes have been made; but the original matter remains substantially as it was first written. I did not know, until after the last of the letters had appeared in print, that the London of Charles Dickens was the subject of a small volume published in England a few years ago; but that a theme has been treated once is not always a reason why it ought not to be treated again. A writer in "Scribner's Monthly" has since gone over the same field, and found many fresh and curious things to tell; and the topic is not yet exhausted. It appears to me that the record of my random saunterings differs

so far from the earlier as well as the later descriptions, that friends of the *Pickwickians* and of their illustrious successors will perhaps not think this republication altogether superfluous. In revising the letters, I have made no use of the investigations of others, except in one instance duly mentioned in the text. I might have enlarged my story if, like the author of the review of *Chinese Metaphysics* in "*The Eatanswill Gazette*," I had read up in handy sources of knowledge, and combined my information; but it seemed better that the book should stand as it was, — the tale of what any idle traveller may see, with the novelist for his guide.

NEW YORK, January, 1881.

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I.

MR. PICKWICK.



A

PICKWICKIAN PILGRIMAGE.

I.

MR. PICKWICK.

AT the Bodleian Library they show you a stained and battered volume in the Russian language, which the besiegers of Sebastopol found among the dreadful ruins of the Redan. What must have been the sensations of the English officer who brought away this blackened relic, when it was submitted to interpretation, and discovered to be a translation of "The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club"? Think of the soldiers of Czar Nicholas sitting down in the midst of death to laugh over Sam Weller. Doubtless they enjoyed the book: it seems to have been well-

thumbed ; and, if it appealed so strongly to them, what wonder that an American in London should be haunted by the spectres of the never-to-be-forgotten Club which have made the names of London streets, and the very aspect of London courts and houses, hardly less familiar to us than our own ? To us the characters in Dickens's earlier books are living personages. I no more doubted that I should discover the footprints of Sam in the Borough, and find the very house of Mrs. Gamp in Kingsgate Street, than I questioned that the ghost of Samuel Pepys made "mighty merry" at The Cock over against Temple Bar, and Will Waterproof still repeated there his lyrical monologues ; or that, when I seated myself on one of the ancient wooden benches of The Cheshire Cheese in a dark little alley off Fleet Street, I should be half conscious of the presence of Oliver Goldsmith and Dr. Johnson in their accustomed corner.

When the guard's horn called me to the window one morning, and I saw a bright yellow and black mail-coach roll rapidly across Trafalgar Square, I remembered that it was on the outside of just such a vehicle, fifty years ago, that Mr. Pickwick and his friends started, from that very spot, on their memorable journeys. The *real* coaching-days of course are over, and it was only an amateur's turn-out which rattled past Charing Cross and down Whitehall; but, looked at from a little distance, the counterfeit was a good one, and the illusion was heightened by the circumstance that this was the precise route by which the Pickwick Club began their adventurous excursions. It was there, next to the corner of the Strand, that Mr. Pickwick, as the second chapter of the book relates, was assaulted by the cabman who took him for an informer; there the voluble Jingle, elbowing his way through the crowd, and making his first appearance in the story, led

Mr. Pickwick into the waiting-room of The Golden Cross, and ordered "raw beefsteak for the gentleman's eye;" and there presently the whole party mounted to the roof of the Rochester coach. The old tavern, if not replaced, is at least transformed, and the coach-yard with its low archway is no more; but the sign of The Golden Cross Hotel on the same site perpetuates the historic association.

Having witnessed, as it were, the departure of the expedition, it was natural to look farther for traces of the Club. It was in Goswell Street, as everybody knows, that Mr. Pickwick lodged in the house of Mrs. Bardell. A roundabout stroll past Furnival's Inn, in whose quiet chambers the first pages of "Pickwick" were written, and John Westlock long afterwards gave the tremendous dinner to Tom Pinch and Ruth; among the secluded groves of Gray's Inn, where Mr. Perker had his office up "two

pairs of steep and dirty stairs ;” through Clerkenwell, where I found in a narrow street, on the edge of the Italian quarter, a dismal shop one step below the sidewalk, with a stuffed canary in the window,—a shop that might pass for that of “Mr. Venus, Preserver of Animals and Birds, Articulator of Human Bones,” only we know from Dickens’s published letters that the original of that establishment, though he places it hereabout, was really in another part of London,—a stroll through regions I had never traversed before, and yet which seemed oddly familiar, as if I had beheld them in a dream,—brought me at last to the street I wanted.

It is in a part of London where there have been many changes. There is a broad and bustling thoroughfare — they call it Goswell Road now — where Mrs. Bardell once “courted the retirement and tranquillity of Goswell Street, and placed in her front parlor

window a written placard bearing the inscription, 'Apartments furnished for a single gentleman.'” A huge block of model lodging-houses rears a variegated front of brick at the corner where I came out upon the road. A horse-railway keeps the neighborhood noisy. But a little farther on toward the heart of the city, the old name of Goswell Street re-appears in some ancient signs; and just before I reached Aldersgate I came upon a row of shabby brick buildings, which seemed to have been forgotten and left behind in the march of improvement. They are three-story-and-attic houses, with hipped-roofs covered with red tiles. The brick, once yellow, is black with age and smoke. The windows are almost as black as the brick. Time and decay have set their mark all over the buildings, and I am sure that inside we should find creaking furniture and stained walls. It is plain that they were dwelling-houses originally, but the ground-

floor of each has been turned into a shop. Except for this change, and for the accumulation of fifty years' grime, they must be in the same condition as when Mr. Pickwick, throwing open his chamber-window at the beginning of the novel, looked out upon the world beneath. "Goswell Street was at his feet, Goswell Street was on his right hand; as far as the eye could reach, Goswell Street extended on his left; and the opposite side of Goswell Street was over the way." These peculiarities of the situation remain unaltered. I amused myself by selecting one of the row as the identical house Dickens must have had in his eye when he described the lodgings of his hero. There is now a cheese and butter shop in the front parlor where Mrs. Bardell entertained Mrs. Cluppins and Mrs. Sanders at tea; and an obtrusive sign-board, bearing the inscription, "The Little Wonder," displays itself over the door. But all above that is the same house I have fig-

ured to myself ever since I was a boy. Save for the intrusion of the shops, I have no doubt we should see the identical green door and yellow door, which occasioned the disagreement between Mr. and Mrs. Raddle, when, after dashing up splendidly in a cabriolet, "actually making more noise than if one had come in one's own carriage," they were subjected to the mortification of having their horse led ignominiously by the cabman to a house with a red door, where the small round head of Master Tommy Bardell showed itself at the window.

It would be a short walk from Goswell Street to St. Paul's, except for the irresistible temptations to turn aside. Carthusian Street beckons us out of Aldersgate to the Charterhouse, whose gray stone cloisters and soft green-carpeted courts seem indescribably peaceful and beautiful in the midst of the surrounding turmoil of trade. The ancient school is no longer here; it has quarters now

in the country : but another school — that of the Merchant Tailors — has acquired the old buildings. The boys were playing at ball when I looked into the enclosure ; and one might almost have fancied that Lovelace and Addison, Dick Steele and Sir William Blackstone, John Wesley, and Thackeray, and John Leech, were all at sport there together. The Hospital is unchanged. The Poor Brothers in their black gowns were issuing from the cheerless refectory, and straggling across the court to their little rooms, as the porter led me in. A bent and gray old gentleman was pointed out to me as one who had been a brave officer, gazetted on many fields ; and I thought it must be Col. Newcome. The labyrinthine alleys of Cloth Fair and Bartholomew Close are only a few steps from the Charterhouse ; and he who has threaded these queer, alluring paths finds himself at the gate of Bartholomew Hospital, where Betsy Prig practised her profession, and

Mr. Jack Hopkins witnessed the remarkable incidents in surgery which he described for Mr. Pickwick's benefit at Bob Sawyer's party. At the back of "Bartlemy's," with shady courts between, is Christ's Hospital school, where the stone effigy of an exceedingly prim royal personage holds up a warning sceptre over the bare-headed blue-coat boys. When I passed around by the Newgate-street entrance, some of the lads, in their dreadful costume, were pacing the covered walks, and a loud-voiced functionary—I have an impression that he wore many buttons, but perhaps it was only his manner that conveyed the sense of buttons—was replying with great asperity to the questions of a visitor. There is a much prettier view of the school from another side. Through a stout iron railing one looks upon a shady quadrangle: the tall stone buildings around it are stained in huge patches, as if the smoke-laden London fogs

of three hundred years, becoming condensed under the eaves and lintels, had dripped down the façade. There I found boys at play, with their blue gowns tucked up about their leather belts, and their yellow legs at liberty. You get this sight of Christ's Hospital from Little Britain, a narrow street which beguiles the confiding wayfarer out of his road by bending at a right angle, like an L,—a freak to which London streets are much addicted. In Little Britain Mr. Jaggers, the lawyer in "Great Expectations," had his offices, and with the aid of his clerk, Wemmick, bullied his felonious clients; and there were always disreputable persons waiting in Bartholomew Close to speak to the great police-court advocate as he passed. Long before the time of Jaggers, Washington Irving made the name of Little Britain dear to us; but the characteristics which gave such a quaint distinction to the street in his day have

vanished, and it is commonplace now and commercial. By Little Britain, after much devious rambling, I got back to Aldersgate, and so found my way, past the Post-office, and the corner of Paternoster Row, into Cheapside and the Poultry, and Lombard Street, the chief resort of financiers.

On the left of this highly respectable street is a square gateway, cut through an imposing modern building. It might have been made for a carriage-entrance, but carriages never use it. Busy men were hurrying in and out, and the polished granite columns of some palace of commerce were visible in the court within. Over the gateway is a small sign, inscribed "George Yard."

It can hardly be necessary to remind the student of Dickens that in George Yard, Lombard Street, stood The George and Vulture Tavern, where Mr. Pickwick and Sam, during the greater part of the time covered by the narrative of their adventures, found

“very good, old-fashioned, comfortable quarters.” I did not expect to see a trace of the old tavern, but I went in. The coach-yard has been turned into a clean, narrow, paved court. The new stone buildings which lift their tall fronts around it remind you of Wall Street. Hostler and boots and trim chambermaid have given place to brokers and insurance-clerks. But off at the farthest end of the yard, so crowded and elbowed by expensive offices that only a fragment of it—the breadth of one window—peeps around the corner of an alley, is a house of more modest aspect, upon which I read the half-effaced sign of The George and Vulture Tavern. The part that is visible from the court seems to have been renewed, or stuccoed; but, passing around to the other side, I found blackened brick walls and old-fashioned windows, which the historian of the Pickwick Club may well have had in his mind when he sketched the tavern. The

ground-floor has been much changed. The coffee-room, enlarged by the outgrowth of an excrescence like a Fulton-Market coffee-stall, is now a chop-house of the slam-bang variety, with fresh oak wainscoting and a general flavor of newness. On one side was a huge broiling-range, with a cook in white cap and apron; opposite the door, in a little enclosed bar, stood a buxom landlady, attended by an imp of a pot-boy. In a corner was an open window with a wooden barrier in front of it; and here, into some invisible bin, the frantic waiters tossed the unconsumed fragments before they "chucked" the dirty plates to the scullion. I sat opposite a commercial gent who was shovelling peas, and ate my chop from a platter of tinned iron. This was more like the eating-house patronized by Mr Guppy and Young Smallweed than the quiet tavern of an earlier time; yet I found it great difficulty in restoring—to my own satisfaction—the features of the original

inn, and imagining that it was up the staircase which now leads right into the eating-room that the sheriff's officer forced his way past Sam Weller on the morning when Mr. Pickwick was taken from The George and Vulture to the Fleet; and in a room overhead that the merry party, including the newly married Mr. and Mrs. Winkle, sat down to dinner on the evening of Mr. Pickwick's release from prison. It is possible that I was quite wrong in all my fancies; but I left the tavern with such a lively sense of the reality of the novelist's characters that I was not in the least surprised when I saw, in large letters over the door of a decorous place of business, at No. 1 Fenchurch Street, the sign, "DOMBEY AND SON."

II.

THE WELLERS.

II.

THE WELLERS.

“THE BOROUGH” is the name commonly given in Mr. Pickwick’s time to that part of London which lies on the south or Surrey side of the Thames, opposite the heart of “The City;” and the Borough High Street, which begins at the Surrey end of London Bridge, has been for centuries the great road to the southern counties. Along this highway the Canterbury Pilgrims travelled to the shrine of Thomas à Becket. The Tabard Inn, around whose plenteous table they assembled before starting on their journey, stood until 1676, and then, being destroyed by fire, was replaced by an exact counterpart, which was not wholly demolished until 1873.

The venerable name is still borne by a degenerate drinking-shop which now affronts the eye on one of the High-street corners. Over the pavement of the High Street rumble all day long the loaded country wagons. The air is heavy with the perfume of hops. The shops and taverns are furnished forth for the accommodation of farmers and carriers, and a queerly mixed flavor of town and country is diffused through the whole region.

It has been a district of taverns for more than five hundred years; and some of the antique inns, dirty, decayed, and fallen from their pristine rank, still show the location and copy the general aspect of the houses of entertainment in whose enclosed yards plays were acted in Shakespeare's time. None of the buildings actually existing now is much more than two hundred years old, but many of them are close reproductions of their hoary predecessors. There are four or five within

half a mile of London Bridge, picturesque and rambling hostelryes of the pattern of The Tabard, with timber galleries running around two or three sides of a rough-paved court. The George Inn, which certainly existed in 1554, and nobody knows how much earlier, was rebuilt according to its original plan after the fire of 1676, and is still venerable in spite of shabbiness and poverty. The front towards the street—or rather the entrance, for at present the houses of this kind have no fronts—is entirely changed; but the inner court presents its original appearance. The King's Head is an inn of the same class. A smart building of yellow stone was going up before it when I was there, with an alley running back to the old tavern. Passing through this rather forbidding tunnel, I found on the right, as I issued into the rear court, a long range of irregular buildings containing the coffee-room of the inn, and beyond that "The King's Head Tap," the appearance of

which stoutly contradicted the promise of "comfortable beds" inscribed upon its front. Although it was July, a fire was blazing in the dark tap-room. Several countrymen were in there drinking; and a spruce young man was coming out in haste, wiping his mouth. The galleries characteristic of this class of house are built of very heavy timbers at The King's Head, and are closed in with lattices.

But the most famous of the old inns in the Borough is The White Hart. Shakespeare mentions "The White Hart in Southwark" ("Henry VI.") as the abode of Jack Cade; and, although that house was burned in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, it was promptly rebuilt in the same style; and the present structure, looking pretty hale at the age of two hundred, is the legitimate representative of the ancient establishment. When Mr. Alfred Jingle ran away with Miss Rachael Wardle, he took that unsuspecting lady to the Borough, because it

was "the last place in the world" that her pursuing brother would think of looking in; and the tavern which he selected was "no less celebrated a one than The White Hart." It was in the yard of this inn, already in Mr. Pickwick's day "degenerated into little more than the abiding and booking place of country wagons," that we were first introduced to Mr. Samuel Weller, who stood at the foot of the gallery steps polishing a row of boots, when Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Wardle, and Mr. Perker arrived there in search of the fugitives. A little way beyond The King's Head, in the midst of new or modernized shops, I found an entrance to this queer place. A lantern overhead bore the sign of The Old White Hart. Picking my way down the muddy passage, I saw before me almost the very scene which the pencil of Phiz drew for us so many years ago. On the right-hand side of the court, in a brick building, dingy but modern, the tavern ap-

peared to be doing a fair business. A printed placard announcing that the establishment would soon be sold at auction, boasted of its valuable country custom, its situation, and its old repute. The clumsy wooden galleries, in two tiers, are still to be seen on the left-hand side of the court, and across the end opposite the entrance, with the doors and windows of the old bed-chambers opening into them, and staircases communicating with the yard. Apparently they are no longer connected with the tavern, but are used for separate tenements. A slatternly woman leaned over the heavy balustrade, just where I thought "the bustling landlady of The White Hart" ought to have been calling to Sam Weller to "clean them shoes for Number Seventeen directly." A loaded country wagon stood in the court exactly as in the familiar picture. A dirty lane, where an old man was pretending to do something with a hoe to a quantity of black mud, gave

approach to the stables in the rear. Some buildings there had recently been demolished, but accommodation enough seemed to have been left. An empty stage-coach was drawn out in the yard, and the stamping of horses was heard in the stalls. The rooms under the side-gallery have been turned into a bacon-curing establishment. A cordial person, of horsey appearance, who was about stepping into a light two-wheel cart, after some refreshment at the bar, remarked to me that curing bacon was very dry work, and that I could not do better than go in and look at the process. I pondered for a moment upon the bearings of these two observations; but, not quite apprehending how they were connected with each other, I let the opportunity slip.

At The White Hart Inn, Mr. Samuel Weller gave Mr. Jingle the remarkable account of the customs of Doctors' Commons, where his eminent parent was inveigled by

one of the "two porters as touts for licenses" into taking out a permit from the Archbishop of Canterbury to marry the widow Susan Clarke, of The Markis o' Granby, Dorking. Naturally, when I left the inn I turned toward St. Paul's Churchyard, and there, in the midst of shops and warehouses, I found the low archway which Sam described. Nothing about it is changed. There, as in the time of Pickwick, still sit just within the entrance the historic "touters." I almost laughed aloud when a "cove in a white apron" touched his hat as I walked in, saying, "License, sir, license?" and, in spite of my answer that I had no need of such a document, seemed disposed to argue with me that I really ought to have one. Very sober and old-fashioned offices they are all around; and one of the most sombre of them is that appropriated to the Vicar-General of the Archbishop of Canterbury, a modest inscription on the door-post intimating that a Mr.

John Hassard is the official in charge. Quiet broods over the drowsy little enclosure. The rattle of carts and omnibuses in the great thoroughfare outside reaches Doctors' Commons as a subdued hum; I could hear the pattering of a gentle rain; and all the soft and various sounds were blended in harmony with the voices of choir-boys practising in a neighboring building. I passed out through a gateway opposite that by which I entered; a second "touter" in a white apron (there were two of them at Doctors' Commons, even in Jingle's time) renewing the offer of assistance in the matter of a license with even greater cordiality than the first.

The haunts of the elder Mr. Weller in London have not all disappeared. He speaks of himself, in one place, as "the celebrated Mr. Weller of The Bell Savage." In Belle Sauvage Yard you will not find the old tavern, the court now being occupied by comparatively new buildings, and one whole

side given up to the publishing-house of Cassell, Petter, & Galpin. Neither does Leadenhall Market contain any longer The Blue Boar, in whose parlor old Weller assisted Sam in the composition of his valentine. But the public house in which the elder Weller was first presented to the acquaintance of a delighted world, I am happy to say, still exists. Mr. Pickwick was walking up Cheapside after his memorable interview with Messrs. Dodson & Fogg, when he turned to Sam, and asked where he could get a glass of brandy-and-water. "Second court on the right-hand side," promptly replied Sam; "last house but vun on the same side the vay. Take the box as stands in the first fireplace, 'cos there an't no leg in the middle o' the table, wich all the others has, and it's very inconwenient." The house was apparently under the special patronage of stage-coachmen; and among a number of gentlemen belonging to that learned profession

who were drinking and smoking in the plainly furnished room, Sam recognized "the ancient," otherwise his respected father. With Sam's direction, of course I had no difficulty in finding the spot. It is up Freeman's Court, nearly opposite Bow Church, Cheapside (not to be confounded with the court of the same name in Cornhill, where Dodson & Fogg had their offices), — a dark little flagged passage, where a man may stand in the middle, and touch the houses on both sides; and the last house but one is "The Old Burton Coffee House," to which the title of "The Silver Grill" has been added as an appendix. It is a small and tidy establishment, no longer appropriated to stage-coachmen — alas! there are but few of those interesting persons lingering on this earth — but patronized, I should say, by the common sort of clerks and shopkeepers. A respectable-looking woman was taking a drink at the bar when I passed — at half-past ten in the

morning. I did not go in: even the privilege of "the box as stands in the first fireplace" would have been but a hollow mockery, since there was no chance of meeting Mr. Weller.

Another house frequented by Old Weller was The Bull, in Whitechapel. It was from this inn that he "worked the Ipswich coach;" and in its yard he was presented to us in pleasant conversation with Sam, on the morning when Mr. Pickwick and his faithful retainer journeyed down to Ipswich for the purpose of exposing the falsehoods of Jingle. The broad, unlovely thoroughfare of Whitechapel begins about half a mile back of the Tower, and, stretching away north-eastward, cuts through one of the most squalid quarters of London. As an old avenue of country travel, it abounds with quaint taverns of the ancient coaching-house pattern. The Bull has doubtless suffered a great deal from the blight of time and the decay of stage-coaches. It shows to the street only a nar-

row front of dark, smoke-stained brick, hardly more than a plain house, with a carriage-way to the rear monopolizing the ground-floor, a lamp and a sign-board over the entrance, and a portrait of the bull just inside, where it is too dark to distinguish the features of the eminent animal. But if new buildings have encroached upon the front, the yards within present their traditional aspect. They form two complete quadrangles, one opening into the other. In the first are to be found on one side the main entrance to the inn, the bar, and the coffee-room ; on the other, the billiard-room and offices. The bed-chambers run all around the upper stories. The inner quadrangle, approached like the first by a covered opening, is devoted principally to the stables.

“Heads!” cried Mr. Weller, as the coach rattled out of the yard of The Bull, with Mr. Pickwick, and Sam, and Mr. Peter Magnus as outside passengers. They drove up

Whitechapel. At the beginning of the Mile End Road an old tavern stands between the street and the sidewalk, the carriage-way passing on one side of it, the footway on the other. This, I suppose, marks the site of the old toll-gate, which suggested the elder Weller's philosophical remark to Mr. Pickwick, that turnpike-keepers were always men who had been disappointed in life: "They shuts themselves up in pikes, partly with the view of being solitary, and partly to rewenge themselves on mankind by taking toll." Beyond that point, in Mr. Pickwick's day, it was doubtless a rustic road; but far beyond it now extends the crowded district wherein poverty and oysters (to cite Sam's observation) prevail together: "and the case is the same," added Weller the elder, "with pickled salmon;" of which delicacy there seems to be an enormous street consumption about Whitechapel and Mile End to this day.

Not far from The Bull, a short street on

the north side of Whitechapel leads into Brick Lane, famous for the meeting of the Brick Lane Branch of the United Grand Junction Ebenezer Temperance Association, at which Mr. Weller and his son witnessed the extraordinary behavior of Brother Stiggins, when that abstemious shepherd charged the whole meeting with being drunk, and then knocked little Mr. Tadger head first down the ladder.

The place with which the elder Weller is most intimately associated in our minds is The Marquis of Granby, at Dorking. There is still a four-horse coach from London to Dorking, as there was fifty years ago, when Sam Weller asked leave of absence to go down and see his father; and those who care to ride on the modern sham, driven by a gentleman in disguise, will find one starting from the same White Horse Cellar in Piccadilly where Mr. Guppy met Esther Summer-son on her first arrival in London. The

distance is about thirty miles, and the road lies through one of the prettiest parts of Surrey. In a long valley between green and shady ridges, on which are fine country mansions embowered in trees, the trim and thriving little market-town of Dorking is packed along a winding street. On one side of the way the houses run up a steep slope; on the other, close lanes lead down to a charming mill-stream. The spire of a brand-new stone church rises among tiled roofs, and contrasts picturesquely with ancient timbered fronts, whose second stories overhang the sidewalk.

The author of "Pickwick" informs us that The Marquis of Granby, over which the elder Weller's "second venture" presided, was "quite a model of a road-side public house of the better class,—just large enough to be convenient, and small enough to be snug. The bar-window displayed a choice collection of geranium plants and a well-

dusted row of spirit-phials. The open shutters bore a variety of golden inscriptions eulogistic of good beds and neat wines ; and the choice group of countrymen and hostlers lounging about the stable-door and horse-trough afforded presumptive proof of the excellent quality of the ale and spirits which were sold within." I did not expect to find over any existing hostelry at Dorking, the likeness of the Marquis of Granby of glorious memory, — "the head and shoulders of a gentleman with an apoplectic countenance, in a red coat with deep-blue facings, and a touch of the same blue over his three-cornered hat for a sky." The novelist would not have given the real name of a tavern to which he assigned such a landlady as Mrs. Weller, and such a frequenter as Mr. Stiggins ; but I was sure, that, under a fictitious or a borrowed name, he sketched, as his custom was, an actual building.

I did not know then, what I learned after-

wards from an interesting illustrated article in "Scribner's Magazine," that Dickens found the name of The Marquis of Granby on a picturesque old inn at Esher, which has been burned down since the article in "Scribner" was written. Strolling through the main street of Dorking, I no sooner espied a certain antiquated tavern before which swung the sign of The King's Head, than I exclaimed to myself, "That is Mrs. Weller's place!" and, under pretext of buying a few photographs, I went into a bookseller's to make inquiries. The shopman did not know The Marquis of Granby: "Dear me, sir, I could not tell you how many gentlemen have asked me that question, just as you are asking me now: all the oldest people in the town say they never heard of a Marquis of Granby in Dorking." But while we were talking, I took up a local guide-book, and almost the first page that I opened told me that my conjecture was correct: The King's

Head ~~was the~~ reputed original of Mrs. Weller's house ; and a little further conversation with the bookseller developed the interesting fact, that for generations the name of Weller has been a well-known one in the neighborhood. What is still more curious is, that the Wellers have mostly been coachmen, fly-drivers, etc.: there is an old Weller in the town now, a superannuated postboy of eighty years.

The inn (I shall take leave to call it The Marquis of Granby, the name by which I am sure we shall all prefer to know it) faces a narrow cross street, only a few yards from the main thoroughfare. Formerly it must have presented a gable-end to the high road ; but the corner of the premises has been cut off, and the post-office now stands there, occupying even a part of the inn itself. The old house is of brick ; and shabby as it is, and crooked and weather-stained, it has doubtless been in its day a structure of some

gentility: the front is decorated with shallow pilasters; and the windows, divided into three compartments by substantial brick mullions and glazed with small diamond panes, have a beautiful and striking effect. A range of irregular buildings, extending some distance in the rear, indicates probably the situation of the old stable-yard. The door-post exhibits a promise of "Good beds;" and the open front door discloses a snug-looking bar, shut in by sash partitions, and screened by clean white muslin curtains. It was within this tempting sanctuary that Mrs. Weller sat on one side of the fire, making tea, while the red-nosed deputy shepherd sat on the other, making toast, when Sam put his arm over the half-door of the bar, unbolted it, and walked in, with the salutation, "Mother-in-law, how are you?" and by the same token the half-door is there yet. The horse-trough is gone; the hostlers have betaken themselves to newer and more thriving

establishments: but just there at the corner must be the spot where Old Weller held the deputy shepherd's head under water until he was almost suffocated; and as I stand in the High Street, looking at the Marquis of Granby, I can almost imagine that I am a spectator of the exhilarating scene. It is the evening after the funeral of Mrs. Weller. The red-nosed man has walked softly into the bar, and filled his glass as usual with pine-apple rum and water, which the afflicted widower has suddenly thrown in his face. "Sammy," exclaims the elder Weller, as he seizes Stiggins by the collar, and falls to kicking him, "put my hat on tight for me;" and then methinks the famous group come bursting out of the little door before me, the mourning hat-bands of Old Weller streaming a yard and a half behind him as he comes.



III.

MR. WINKLE'S DUEL.—ROCHESTER.

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MR. WINKLE'S DUEL. — ROCHESTER.

WHEN Mr. Pickwick, in the fifth chapter of the history, “leaned over the balustrades of Rochester Bridge, contemplating nature, and waiting for breakfast,” he looked upon very nearly the same beautiful scene which is visible from that situation to-day. The old stone bridge has been replaced by a less picturesque structure of iron; but the banks of the Medway still present a rich and varied landscape, with cornfields and pastures, and the spires of distant churches; the lazy boats still float on the sluggish river; and the ancient castle—its towers roofless, its massive walls crumbling away—still rises in the midst of foliage on the skirt

of the city. It was over Rochester Bridge that the coach rattled in the second chapter of the book, with the Pickwickians and Mr. Jingle on the roof; Mr. Jingle soliloquizing volubly about the associations awakened by the castle and the old cathedral, both which venerable buildings are conspicuous objects from the road as one draws near. The railway-train now leaves the traveller at the end of the bridge; and it is only a few steps from the station up the narrow High Street to The Bull Inn, where the coach stopped on the memorable occasion of the Pickwick Club's visit. It was at The Bull Inn that the Pickwickians put up (by Jingle's advice), and invited their new acquaintance to dine with them that evening. At The Bull, Jingle went to the ball in Mr. Winkle's coat, incensed Dr. Slammer, and provoked the challenge to a duel; and from The Bull our friends afterwards set out for Dingley Dell, Mr. Winkle on horseback, and Mr. Pickwick

driving the chaise. It seems to have been a favorite house with Dickens (his own house at Gad's Hill was not far away); for, besides being pleasantly mentioned in *Pickwick*, it is referred to in the recent volumes of *Letters*, in connection with schemes for a frolic with sundry of the novelist's intimate companions.

To this day it remains about as Mr. *Pickwick* beheld it, — a fine specimen of the old-fashioned country tavern, clean, comfortable, cosy, spacious, full of surprising stairs and unaccountable corners, and stoutly resisting the encroachments of improvement. It thrusts itself so close to the roadway that the passers-by brush against the coffee-room windows. There is a wide front of brick, without porch or door. Three lamps hang over a square carriage-entrance, cut through the middle of the house; and a quotation from *Jingle* — “ ‘ Good house — nice beds.’ *Vide Pickwick* ” — is inscribed upon the side-posts. Within the passage, on the right, is

the entrance to the commercial room and smoking-room, as well as to the kitchen; this last-named sanctuary, brilliant with glowing coals and rows of shining copper, lying well open to view. It was near the close of market-day when I arrived: waiters were hurrying in and out: chops and rashers of ham were sputtering tremendously on the gridirons; bagmen were displaying their wares to country shopkeepers. On the left, the upper floors are supported by a row of wooden columns; and at the back of the portico thus formed is a snug enclosure of glass, through which lies the approach to the coffee-room and bar. At the rear of the carriage-way is the quadrangular stable-yard, with ranges of odd buildings around it. Vehicles of all sorts, from the smart mail-coach to the little two-wheel cart, were drawn under the sheds; and hostlers and big dogs were bustling about the court. Among the columns on the coffee-room side, hung a tempting array

of hams, grouse, and ribs of beef; and through this grove of good things my companion and I reached the vestibule, where a smiling landlady gave us a pleasant welcome. A glass cupboard displayed shelves filled with polished plate and pewter. A show-window exhibited rounds of roast beef, legs of lamb, cold fowls, and hanging nets of eggs and lemons. Beside it was the entrance to the public bar, fragrant with spice and spirits; and there were glimpses of the landlady's cheerful bar-parlor in the distance. A broad old-fashioned staircase, whose bare boards were as white as much scrubbing could make them, was decorated with a very gallery of art, in which the portrait of Charles Dickens held a conspicuous place. The Duke of Wellington, the Death of Nelson, a stuffed terrier, a fleet of six impossible ships in a perfectly inconceivable indigo sea, a collection of highly-colored Turks and other picturesque Orientals, the skeleton of a monkey, and a

colossal bust of Samuel Hahnemann, were among the treasures disposed upon the walls and landings. So intricate are the passages, so absurd and inconsequential the chamber-galleries and crooked flights of stairs, that I repeatedly lost the way between my bedroom and sitting-room, although one was almost directly over the other.

I never thought of the incidents connected with the visit of *The Pickwickians* to *The Bull* as being imaginary. Making no doubt that an actual Jingle did go to a ball there, in the coat of an actual Winkle, I naturally assumed that there was a ball-room; and therefore, having despatched a comfortable dinner, I requested the waiter to conduct us to that apartment—much as I might have asked leave at the Deanery of Westminster to see the Jerusalem Chamber. It occurred to me afterwards, that it was perhaps unusual for a gentleman and his wife to go to a strange hotel, on a stormy evening, and,

without even the scrape of a fiddle, to ask abruptly for the ball-room, as if it were as much a matter of course as the bootjack. But the waiter did not seem to be at all astonished : an English waiter is never astonished unless you insist upon ordering a dinner without “a bit of fried sole ;” and we were duly shown to the very room in which Jingle paid such court to the little widow, and roused such fury in the breast of the surgeon of the Ninety-seventh. It is a spacious apartment, up one flight of stairs, with a row of large windows overlooking the stable-yard ; antique in its decorations, with papered and wainscoted walls, a ceiling adorned with simple geometrical designs, double doors, and over them the little gallery, or pen, in which, as the historian of the ball mentions, the musicians were “securely confined.” There is a dark ante-room ; and near it are several sitting-rooms, which could be devoted on festive occasions to cards and refreshments. At

the time of our visit the ante-room was a receptacle for lumber, and the ball-room itself was in use for the drying of sheets and towels. Now and then, however, a ball still takes place there; and I should judge that the general aspect of the apartments has not been at all changed since the days of Mr. Pickwick. Anybody who will consult the original print of Dr. Slammer demanding Jingle's card on the staircase may see exactly how the stairs look at this day.

As the ball led to the duel, so a visit to the scene of offence was naturally followed, the next morning, by an excursion to the field of the hostile meeting. In the face of a gale of wind and a pitiless rain, we struggled up a steep hill and across a sodden field to Fort Pitt, which occupies a commanding point on the ridge between Chatham and Rochester, and is, indeed, the only thing which keeps the two towns from running together. "If anybody knows to a nicety,"

says Dickens in one of his later short stories, "where Rochester ends and Chatham begins, it is more than I do." I durst not ask the serious waiter if he knew the spot where Mr. Winkle was to have fought the duel; but fortunately the directions of Dr. Slammer's second were too clear to be mistaken. "Turn into the field which borders the trench," said he to Mr. Winkle; "take the foot-path to the left when you arrive at an angle of the fortification, and keep straight on." We followed these instructions, and found ourselves in a rather lonely region of open meadow, with a clump of trees in the distance; much less secluded than it was in Mr. Winkle's time, for the houses of Chatham and Rochester are in full view now, and cattle, dogs, and idle boys stray from the outskirts across the very field of gore, yet still a spot where two gentlemen might shoot at one another after sundown without the certainty of interruption. It will always be

a great satisfaction to have seen this historic ground, though nothing could have been more uncomfortable than our stroll through such a wet and windy country. The dripping sentry in his box at the fortress-gate looked with wonder at persons who came abroad in such weather without apparent necessity; and even the dispirited cattle seemed to watch with surprise my difficulties with the umbrella, as we slipped and stumbled along the miry path and across the bleak common. We passed, on the way back to the inn, the poor little Theatre Royal, where Jingle and Dismal Jemmy were to act on the morrow of the duel; and then we waited for sunshine to see the rest of Rochester.

The old city is often mentioned in the stories of Dickens: sometimes it is described by its proper name. In "The Mystery of Edwin Drood," it is slightly disguised as Cloisterham; in "Great Expectations," it is merely spoken of as "the market-town,"

four miles from the unnamed **village on the** marshes, where Pip lived with Joe Gargery. The Christmas story of "The Seven Poor Travellers" gives us some admirable views of Rochester; the scene being laid at a charitable institution in the High Street, over whose quaint arched door may be read this odd inscription: "Richard Watts, Esq., by his Will, dated 22 Aug. 1579, founded this Charity for Six poor Travellers, who not being ROGUES, or PROCTORS, May receive gratis for one Night, Lodging, Entertainment, and Four-pence each." When Dickens wrote of it in "Household Words," the charity continued to be duly bestowed according to the terms of the will, the prescribed number of poor travellers never failing to present themselves; and I presume that the six beds are still occupied every night. "The silent High Street of Rochester," says the same story, "is full of gables, with old beams and timbers carved into strange faces. It is oddly


garnished with a queer old clock that projects over the pavement out of a grave red-brick building, as if Time carried on business there, and hung out his sign. Sooth to say, he did an active stroke of work in Rochester in the old days of the Romans and the Saxons and the Normans, and down to the times of King John, when the rugged Castle — I will not undertake to say how many hundreds of years old then — was abandoned to the centuries of weather which have so defaced the dark apertures in its walls that the ruin looks as if the rooks and daws had picked its eyes out."

It was a never-failing amusement to wander about this deserted stronghold, and walk the hardly less sleepy High Street, where little shops in which nobody bought any thing were as closely packed together as if land, in such a centre of commerce, were worth fabulous sums per square inch. In truth, the shops have the same listless aspect

now which Pip remarked when he noticed that “Mr. Pumblechook appeared to conduct his business by looking across the street at the saddler, who appeared to transact *his* business by keeping his eye on the coach-maker, who appeared to get on in life by putting his hands in his pockets and contemplating the baker, who, in his turn, folded his arms and stared at the grocer, who stood at his door and yawned at the chemist. The watchmaker, always poring over a little desk with a magnifying-glass at his eye, and always inspected by a group in smock-frocks poring over him through the glass of his shop-window, seemed to be about the only person in the High Street whose trade engaged his attention.”

The cathedral precincts, reached by a short lane and an old gateway, were hardly more quiet than this main avenue of the quiet city. The “wonderfully quaint row of red-brick tenements, inhabited by the Minor

Canons," slept in the afternoon sunlight. A green open space called The Vines was so still and desolate that I could hardly realize it was, so to speak, the back-yard of the town. Close by "the nooks of ruin where the old monks once had their refectories and gardens, and where the strong walls were now pressed into the service of humble sheds and stables," a long, substantial, antiquated brick manor-house, which had the appearance of being shut up very tight, and walled and barred very carefully against intruders, showed a picturesque front among the trees and shrubs; but it was lifeless, like every thing else in that slumberous region. Lifeless, yet peopled with the images of familiar forms that never existed. For this was the Satis House of "Great Expectations," in whose upper chambers, closed to the light of day, Miss Havisham, faded and yellow, sat always in her faded wedding-gown. This, I say, was the house described in the novel, for



so Mr. Forster's *Life of Dickens* assures us; but it is really called Restoration House, while Satis House is the actual name of another antiquity of Rochester, the old home of the founder of Watts's Charity. In the story Miss Havisham's house is pulled down, after the death of its wretched mistress and the scattering of the other characters grouped around it; but in reality there it still stands. I was half tempted to wait a while, and see if Mr. Pumblechook would not bring Pip to the court-yard gate, and Estella answer their ring; and as I walked back to the inn I was a little disappointed at not meeting that unlimited miscreant, "Trabb's boy," feigning extreme terror at the dignity of Pip's appearance in the dress of a fine gentleman, and staggering out into the High Street, crying to the populace, "Hold me! I'm so frightened!"



IV.

MRS. GAMP.—TODGERS'S.




IV.

MRS. GAMP. — TODGERS'S.

BESIDES The Bull at Rochester and The Bull in Whitechapel, there is another Bull Inn which makes a prominent figure in one of the Dickens novels. It is The Bull in Holborn, the tavern in which Mrs. Gamp and Betsy Prig, nursing Lewsome, turn and turn about, one off, one on, exhibited their remarkable system for the management of a sick-room. The Bull still displays his imposing picture on the north side of the street, as he did that morning when Lewsome, having been thrust into his clothes by the combined exertions of the two nurses, with his boots reversed, the points of his collars in his eyes, his buttons fastened awry, the soap


in his mouth, his scalp rasped with a stiff hair-brush, and Mrs. Gamp's night-bottle, "an ingun or two, and a little tea and sugar" in his coat-pockets, was assisted into the coach at the door, watched with the keenest interest by Mr. Mould the undertaker, as "a gentleman likely to suit" him; while Mr. Nadgett, with his pocket-book full of secrets, waited in the darkest box of the coffee-room for the man who never kept his appointment.

The home of Mrs. Gamp was not far from The Bull. She lodged over the shop of Poll Sweedlepipe, easy-shaver and bird-fancier, in Kingsgate Street. Holborn in London may be compared to the Bowery in New York; and Kingsgate Street, a short and shabby passage out of Holborn on the north, is in the character of its houses not unlike parts of Staunton, Rivington, Second, and similar streets, which issue from the east side of the Bowery. Anybody who will turn to Phiz's picture of Mr. Pecksniff trying to



knock up Mrs. Gamp will see an exact representation of the general aspect of the neighborhood. Barbers abound in that region. The first sign encountered on turning out of Holborn is "Easy Shaving, One Penny;" and just beyond it is a more pretentious establishment, which holds out the ambiguous promise, "Gentlemen's Hair Cut and Brushed by Machinery." Neither of these could be Poll Sweedlepipe's; but at the other end of the street the house may be seen. It is a mean and crooked building, only two windows wide, with a striped barber's pole, a low doorway, and a common little show-window, in which are displayed not birds, it is true, but a variety of trumpery wares, principally gilt brooches and black-headed pins, by the sale of which, as well as by mending cheap clocks, the successor of Poll Sweedlepipe relieves his mind from the strain of easy shaving. In the familiar picture a rag-dealer is represented as one of Mrs.

Gamp's neighbors; and in reality a sign across the street announces that the business of a "rag, bottle, and bone merchant" is there carried on. By the medium of a printed bill in a shop-window, at the time of my visit, "Messrs. Jones, Nutkins, Vickers, and Patrickson begged to announce to their numerous friends and the public that they intended holding a plain dress ball," with an "efficient band" and tickets at sixpence. Two young women, somewhat the worse for drink, at that moment leaning against a lamp-post, and smiling amiably upon a young man who was trying to engage them in conversation, were certainly qualified by the plainness of their attire to grace that costly entertainment. On the window-sill, over the easy-shaver's show-window, Mrs. Gamp kept a row of flower-pots, by rattling among which with the cabman's whip, Mr. Pecksniff finally aroused her; and there I actually beheld a similar row of flower-pots — who



knows but the very same?—in the year 1879.

As I contemplated this vivid realization of a well-remembered picture, I became conscious that the reproduction was completed in an unexpected manner. When Mr. Pecksniff began to knock, "every window in the street became alive with female heads." "He's as pale as a muffin," said one lady. "So he ought to be if he's the feeling of a man," observed another. I did not inquire the occupation of the easy-shaver's present lodger, who keeps the flower-pots; but the manifestations of interest by the population of Kingsgate Street in the movements of the stranger who was looking at the shop made it seem probable that Mrs. Gamp had left a successor to her business at the old stand. A stout lady next door showed so much anxiety that I hurried away, lest she should call out, in the words of her prototypes, "Knock at the winder, sir; knock at the


winder. Lord bless you! don't lose no more time than you can help: knock at the winder."

There are not many of the localities in "Martin Chuzzlewit" which can be so clearly identified as this little barber-shop; still there are several neighborhoods in London whose names are inseparably associated in our minds with the story. I made a journey to Austin Friars, because in that secluded nook mysterious little Mr. Fips had his dark chambers, where Tom Pinch called weekly for his salary, and tried in vain to learn the name of the unknown employer who gave him occupation at the Temple. It is a crooked and ghostly sort of place, off Broad Street, near the Bank, intensely quiet in the very heart of business, with narrow alleys and gateways leading into it, and at one of the arched entrances an ancient sculptured pilaster, relic of the departed monks from whom the tangle of yards and lanes take their name. In the very

middle of the place, packed away so tightly that nothing of it is left uncovered except two aged doors and an odd window or so, is a surprising old Dutch church. It was after the close of business hours when I sauntered into the silent precincts, trying to choose among the old-fashioned houses the one that I should prefer for the residence of old Martin Chuzzlewit's confidential agent and Tom Pinch's inscrutable acquaintance. A janitor, sweeping a flight of well-worn steps, asked me whose chamber I was looking for. "Mr. Fips's" was on my tongue; but I checked myself; and answering, "Thank you, I want no one," I went out, by another court than that which brought me in, to the street called London Wall.

Of the home of old Anthony Chuzzlewit and his son Jonas, we are merely told that it was in a very narrow street somewhere behind the Post-Office; and of an equally celebrated place in the same story, to wit, Todgers's

Commercial Boarding-House, the location is hardly more clearly defined. We only know that it was near the Monument which lifts its ridiculous flame-crowned head a few rods from London Bridge to commemorate the great fire of 1666. "Surely," says the novelist, "there never was, in any other borough, city, or hamlet in the world, such a singular sort of a place as Todgers's. And surely London, to judge from that part of it which hemmed Todgers's round, and hustled it, and crushed it, and stuck its brick-and-mortar elbows into it, and kept the air from it, and stood perpetually between it and the light, was worthy of Todgers's, and qualified to be on terms of close relationship and alliance with hundreds and thousands of the odd family to which Todgers's belonged." I have seen, up besmeared and secluded lanes in the City, a great many commercial boarding-houses which answer pretty well to the description of that famous abode. They



lurk in blind and forgotten alleys and remote courts; and their proprietors have a singular habit of putting up little illegible signs in places where nobody can discover them except after persevering search: I came upon one of these secret advertisements on the inner side of an archway, where it could only be seen by a person going away from the house. These establishments, however, are to be sought now in the neighborhood of Fleet Street rather than of London Bridge.

I walked all about the dingy region near Monument Square; I even climbed to the top of the Monument in the hope of looking down upon Todgers's roof with its posts and fragments of rotten clothes-lines, and, its two or three tea-chests with forgotten plants in them like old walking-sticks; and if I failed to single out the particular house which was graced by the services of Young Bailey and honored by the patronage of Mr. Pecksniff, I consoled myself by recalling the remark of

the author of the story, that nobody ever found Todgers's by a verbal direction. "You couldn't walk about in Todgers's neighborhood as you could in any other neighborhood—you groped your way for an hour through lanes, and by-ways, and court-yards, and passages; and you never once emerged upon any thing that might reasonably be called a street. A kind of resigned distraction came over the stranger as he trod those devious mazes, and, giving himself up for lost, went in and out and round about, and quietly turned back again when he came to a dead wall or was stopped by an iron railing, and felt that the means of escape might possibly present themselves in their own good time, but that to anticipate them was hopeless." The truth is, whatever the neighborhood may have been when the book was written, it is not now so utterly bewildering as this extract would lead one to suppose. But the narrow thoroughfares, the ancient mansions turned into store-

houses, the dark yards, the drowsy offices, are still to be found about Pudding and Bortolph and Love Lanes; and the same flavor of musty oranges, which the historian of "Martin Chuzzlewit" noticed, still hangs about this antique region. Cargoes of "damaged oranges, with blue and green bruises on them," must be festering in the cellars. I wandered up and down the steep lanes, and never lost the sense of mildewed oranges until I came to the river, where Billingsgate overpowered all other smells with the fragrance of fish.



V.

**THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF
THE LAW.**

V.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF
THE LAW.

It was on a showery summer morning that I found myself, after much aimless strolling through I know not what tangle of absurd streets, in Fountain Court of The Temple, where dull buildings of blackened brick look down upon one of the most charming spots in London. The ancient historic chambers suggesting dust and cobwebs; the arched passages and confusing alleys in which the stranger quickly loses the points of the compass; the wig and robe maker's shop hiding in a dark corner; the venerable Temple Church shut in so cosily among the lawyers; the sculptured effigies of departed knights, lying cross-legged on the pavement within,

and the grave of Oliver Goldsmith in the flagged court without; the pretty house of the master of The Temple (that is, the preacher at The Temple Church); the Gothic Library Hall with its imposing and picturesque approach; green terraces; worn stone walks; a broad blooming garden sloping to the Thames — these are the chief features in a scene of which it seemed to me that the visitor could never tire. But I liked no part of it better than the little yard around the fountain whence, looking down a flight of stone steps, the eye rested upon the fresher Garden Court beyond. The rain had ceased when I came to Fountain Court; the nodding trees and flowers sparkled in the sunshine; dancing shadows speckled the trim turf; the fountain played merrily; a pretty young woman tripped across the court; and I wondered if she could really be Ruth Pinch, and if John Westlock would not join her. For here occurred the dainty love-scenes

between those two young persons; here the plashing water whispered the secret which simple-hearted Tom was so slow to understand.

The Temple is crowded with the ghosts of fiction. Here were the neglected chambers, lumbered with heaps and parcels of books, where Tom Pinch was set to work by Mr. Fips, and where old Martin Chuzzlewit revealed himself in due time and knocked Mr. Pecksniff into a corner. Here Mr. Mortimer Lightwood's dismal office-boy leaned out of a dismal window overlooking the dismal churchyard; and here Mortimer and Eugene were visited by Mr. Boffin offering a large reward for the conviction of the murderer of John Harmon; by that honest water-side character Rogue Riderhood, anxious to earn "a pot o' money" in the sweat of his brow by swearing away the life of Gaffer Hexam; by Bradley Headstone and Charley Hexam; by "Mr. Dolls," negotiating for "three

penn'orths of rum." It was in Garden Court of The Temple, in the house nearest the river, that Pip, holding his lamp over the stairs one stormy night, saw the returned convict climbing up to his rooms to disclose the mystery of his Great Expectations. Close by the gateway from The Temple into Fleet Street, and adjoining the site of Temple Bar, is Child's ancient banking-house, the original of Tellson's Bank in "A Tale of Two Cities." The demolition of Temple Bar made necessary some alterations in the Bank too; and when I was last there the front of the old building which so long defied time and change was boarded up.

Chancery Lane opposite The Temple, running from Fleet Street to Holborn, — a distance only a little greater than that between the Fifth and Sixth Avenues in New York, — is the principal pathway through the "perplexed and troublous valley of the shadow of the law." At either end of it there are fresh

green spots; but the lane itself is wholly given up to legal dust and darkness. Facing it, on the farther side of Holborn, in a position corresponding with that of The Temple at the Fleet-street extremity, is Gray's Inn, especially attractive to me on account of the long grassy enclosure within its innermost court, so smooth and bright and well kept that I always stopped to gaze longingly at it through the railed barrier which shuts strangers out—as if here were a tennis-lawn reserved for the exclusive use of frisky barristers. At No. 2, Holborn Court, in Gray's Inn, David Copperfield, on his return from abroad near the end of the story, found the rooms of that rising young lawyer, Mr. Thomas Traddles. There was a great scuffling and scampering when David knocked at the door; for Traddles was at that moment playing puss-in-the-corner with Sophy and “the girls.” Thavies' Inn, on the other side of Holborn, a little farther east, is no longer

enclosed : it is only a little fragment of shabby street which starts, with mouth wide open, to run out of Holborn Circus, and stops short after a few rods, without having got anywhere. The faded houses look as if they belonged in East Broadway ; and in one of them lived Mrs. Jellyby. Staple Inn, almost face to face with Gray's Inn, is a place of a very different sort. It is reached from Holborn through a gateway in a row of the quaintest and most ancient of crooked and heavily-timbered houses, which turn their gables towards the busy street ; and, after passing through sundry inconsequential courts, one issues from its shady recesses into Chancery Lane. Hawthorne has written about it ; and perhaps it has been oftener and better described than any of the other inns except The Temple (the oldest of all), and Lincoln's Inn whose noble gateway rises, hoary and majestic, on the west side of Chancery Lane.

The buildings within the large enclosure

of Lincoln's Inn are a strange mixture of aged dulness and new splendor; but the old houses and the old court-rooms seem to be without exception dark, stuffy, and inconvenient. Here were the chambers of Kenge and Carboy, and the dirty and disorderly offices of Sergeant Snubbin, counsel for the defendant in the suit of Bardell against Pickwick. Here the Lord Chancellor sat in the heart of the fog, to hear the case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce. At the back of the Inn, in the shabby-genteel square called Lincoln's Inn Fields, Mr. Tulkinghorn was murdered in his rusty apartment. The story of "Bleak House" revolves about Lincoln's Inn. The whole neighborhood has an air of mystery and a scent like a stationer's shop. Always I found Mr. Guppy there, with a necktie much too smart for the rest of his clothes, and a bundle of documents tied with red tape. Jobling and Young Smallweed sometimes stopped to talk with him. The doors

of the close court-rooms opened now and then, and gentlemen in gowns and horsehair wigs came out to speak with clients who waited under the arches.

In one of the miserable side streets near Chancery Lane I found a wretched house in ruins, the front half fallen in, the black floor-beams exposed to view, the threshold sunk below the sidewalk, planks nailed across the windows, a barrier in front to warn passers-by that the pile might tumble upon them. It was not difficult to associate this spectacle with the shop of old Krook, the rag and waste-paper dealer, the lodging of little Miss Flite, the scene of the death of the mysterious law-writer; but in reality I think the "narrow back street, part of some courts and lanes immediately outside the wall of the Inn," in which the novelist places Krook's shop, must have been on the land between Lincoln's Inn and the Strand afterwards cleared to make room for the new Law

Courts. The shop of Mr. Snagsby, the law-stationer, is said to have been in "Cook's Court, Cursitor Street;" and in Cursitor Street on the east of Chancery Lane, as well as in an L-shaped and sombre court which runs out of it, there is a dense colony of stationers and of law-copyists besides; most of the latter class of persons living in humble lodgings, where the rickety windows are obscured by a thick crust of smoke and dirt. But the real name of the alley which runs out of Cursitor Street is Took's Court. Cook's Court is on the other side of Chancery Lane. The noisome alley described in "Bleak House" by the name of Tom-All-Alone's has its counterpart in a lane which I saw near this quarter: the tall houses, leaning over towards one another, were kept apart by timbers stretched across from front to front; and dirty children upon whom the sun never shone sat at the doors with their feet in perennial mud.

The climax of "Bleak House" is the pursuit of Lady Dedlock, and the finding of the fugitive, cold and dead, with one arm around a rail of the dark little graveyard where they buried the law-copyist, "Nemo," and where poor Jo, the crossing-sweeper, came at night and swept the stones as his last tribute to the friend who "was very good" to him. There are three striking descriptions of this place in the novel. "A hemmed-in churchyard, pestiferous and obscene—a beastly scrap of ground which a Turk would reject as a savage abomination, and a Caffre would shudder at. With houses looking on, on every side, save where a reeking little tunnel of a court gives access to the iron gate—with every villany of life in action close on death, and every poisonous element of death in action close on life; here they lower our dear brother down a foot or two; here sow him in corruption to be raised in corruption; an avenging ghost at many a sick-bed-

side ; a shameful testimony to future ages how civilization and barbarism walked this boastful island together." The exact situation of the graveyard is not defined in the novel ; but it was evidently near Lincoln's Inn, and Mr. Winter told us, in one of his delightful London letters, that it was also near Drury Lane. So strangely hidden away is it among close and dirty houses, that it was only after three long searches through all the courts thereabouts that I found the "reeking little tunnel," and twice I passed the entrance without observing it. Opening out of Drury Lane, at the back and side of the theatre, is a network of narrow flagged passages built up with tall houses. There are rag and waste-paper shops in this retreat, two or three dreadful little greengrocers' stalls, a pawnbroker's, a surprising number of cobblers, and in the core of the place, where the alley widens into the semblance of a dwarfed court, a nest of dealers in theatrical finery,

dancing-shoes, pasteboard rounds of beef and cutlets, stage armor, and second-hand play-books. Between Marquis Court on the one hand, Russell Court on the other, and a miserable alley called Cross Court which connects them, is what appears at first sight to be a solid block of tenements. The graveyard is in the very heart of this populous block. The door of one of the houses stood open, and through a barred staircase-window at the back of the entry I caught a glimpse of a patch of grass—a sight so strange in this part of London that I went around to the other side of the block to examine further. There I found the “reeking little tunnel.” It is merely a stone-paved passage about four feet wide through the ground floor of a tenement. House-doors open into it. A lamp hangs over the entrance. A rusty iron gate closes it at the farther end. Here is the “pestiferous and obscene churchyard,” completely hemmed in by the habita-

tions of the living. Few of the graves are marked, and most of the tombstones remaining are set up on end against the walls of the houses. Perhaps a church stood there once, but there is none now. Though burials are no longer permitted in this hideous spot, the people of the block, when they shut their doors at night, shut the dead in with them. The dishonoring of the old graves goes on briskly. Inside the gate lay various rubbish, — a woman's boot, a broken coal-scuttle, the foot of a tin candlestick, fragments of paper, sticks, bones, straw, — unmentionable abominations; and over the dismal scene a reeking, smoke-laden fog spread darkness and moisture.



VI.

LIMEHOUSE HOLE.

VI.

LIMEHOUSE HOLE.

THERE is a part of the Thames below the Tower — a stretch of filthy water, in which rubbish is forever floating up and down with the tide in the black shadow of grimy warehouses — where Dickens must have been almost as much at home as the nondescript semi-marine characters by whom the shores are inhabited. It is the region of the Docks, between Wapping and the Isle of Dogs. On the Surrey side, “near to that part of the Thames on which the church at Rotherhithe abuts, where the buildings on the banks are dirtiest and the vessels on the river blackest with the dust of colliers and the smoke of close-built, low-roofed houses,”

was once the maze of loathsome buildings occupying the mud-bank of Jacob's Island," described forty years ago as the scene of the death of Bill Sikes in "Oliver Twist." On the Middlesex side, a little farther down stream, is the slimy and low-lying locality called Limehouse Hole. It was from the police-station in this quarter that the novelist often started on his night tours with the river police. When Inspector Bucket set forth with Esther Summerson to hunt Lady Dedlock, they came first to this quarter. "A man yet dark and muddy, in long, swollen sodden boots, and a hat like them, was called out of a boat, and whispered with Mr. Bucket, who went away with him down some slippery steps—as if to look at something secret that he had to show. They came back, wiping their hands upon their coats, after turning over something wet." In this quarter again lived Rogue Riderhood and Gaffer Hexam. Here

occurred the "Harmon murder," which lays the foundation for the novel of "Our Mutual Friend;" and here stood The Six Jolly Fellowship Porters public house, ruled by the severe Miss Abbey Potterson.

I took a steamboat one day at Westminster Bridge, and after a voyage of forty minutes or so landed near Limehouse Hole, and followed the river streets both east and west. It was easy enough to trace the course of Mortimer Lightwood and Eugene Wrayburn, as they walked under the guidance of Riderhood through the stormy night from their rooms in The Temple, four miles away, past the Tower and the London Docks, and down by the slippery water's edge to Limehouse Hole, when they went to cause Gaffer Hexam's arrest, and found him drowned, tied to his own boat. The strictly commercial aspect of the Docks—the London Docks above and the West India Docks below—shades off by slight degrees into

the black misery of the Hole. The warehouses are succeeded by boat-builders' sheds; by private wharves, where ships, all hidden, as to their hulls, behind walls and close fences, thrust unexpected bowsprits over the narrow roadway; by lime-yards; by the shops of marine store-dealers and purveyors to all the wants and follies of seamen; and then by a variety of strange establishments which it would be hard to classify. Close by a yard piled up with crates and barrels of second-hand bottles, was a large brick warehouse devoted to the purchase and sale of broken glass. A wagon loaded with that commodity stood before the door, and men with scoop-shovels were transferring the glass into barrels. An enclosure of one or two acres, in an out-of-the-way street, might have been the original of the dust-yard that contained Boffin's Bower, except that Boffin's Bower was several miles distant, on the northern outskirt of London.

A string of carts, full of miscellaneous street and house rubbish, all called here by the general name of "dust," were waiting their turn to discharge. There was a mountain of this refuse at the end of the yard; and a party of laborers, more or less impeded by two very active black hogs, were sifting and sorting it. Other mounds, formed from the siftings of the first, were visible at the sides. There were huge accumulations of broken crockery and of scraps of tin and other metal, and of bones. There was a quantity of stable-manure and old straw, and a heap, as large as a two-story cottage, of old hoops stripped from casks and packing-cases. I never understood, until I looked into this yard, how there could have been so much value in the dust-mounds at Boffin's Bower.

Gradually the streets became narrower, wetter, dirtier, and poorer. Hideous little alleys led down to the water's edge where the high tide splashed over the stone steps.

I turned into several of them, and I always found two or three muddy men lounging at the bottom; often a foul and furtive boat crept across the field of view. The character of the shops became more and more difficult to define. Here a window displayed a heap of sailor's thimbles and pack-thread; there another set forth an array of trumpery glass vases or a basket of stale fruit, pretexts, perhaps, for the disguise of a "leaving shop," or unlicensed pawnbroker's establishment, out of which I expected to see Miss Pleasant Riderhood come forth, twisting up her back hair as she came. At a place where the houses ceased, and an open space left free a prospect of the black and bad-smelling river, there was an old factory, disused and ruined, like the ancient mill in which Gaffer Hexam made his home, and Lizzie told the fortunes of her brother in the hollow by the fire.

I turned down a muddy alley, where twelve

or fifteen placards headed BODY FOUND were pasted against the wall. They were printed forms, filled in with a pen. Mr. Forster tells us in his *Life of Dickens* that it was the sight of bills of this sort which gave the first suggestion of "Our Mutual Friend." At the end of the alley was a neat brick police-station; stairs led to the water, and several trim boats were moored there. Within the station I could see an officer quietly busy at his desk, as if he had been sitting there ever since Dickens described "the Night Inspector, with a pen and ink and ruler, posting up his books in a whitewashed office as studiously as if he were in a monastery on the top of a mountain, and no howling fury of a drunken woman were banging herself against a cell-door in the back yard at his elbow." A handsome young fellow in uniform, who looked like a cross between a sailor and a constable, came out and asked very civilly if he could be of use to me. "Do you know,"

said I, "where the station was that Dickens describes in 'Our Mutual Friend'?"

"Oh, yes, sir! this is the very spot. It was the old building that stood just here: this is a new one, but it has been put up in the same place."

"Mr. Dickens often went out with your men in the boat, didn't he?"

"Yes, sir, many a night in the old times."

"Do you know the tavern which is described in the same book by the name of the Six Jolly Fellowship Porters?"

"No, sir, I don't know it; at least not by that name. It may have been pulled down, for a lot of warehouses have been built along here, and the place is very much changed; or it may be one of those below."

Of course I chose to think that it must be "one of those below." I kept on a little farther, by the crooked river lanes, where public houses were as plentiful as if the entire population suffered from a raging and inex-

tinguishable thirst for beer. The sign-boards displayed a preference for the plural which seems not to have escaped the observation of the novelist. If I did not see *The Six Porters*, I came across *The Three Mariners*, *The Three Cups*, *The Three Suns*, *The Three Tuns*, *The Three Foxes*, and *The Two Brewers*; and in the last I hope that I found the original of the tavern so often mentioned in the story. I had first noticed it from the steamboat, — “a narrow, lop-sided wooden jumble of corpulent windows heaped one upon another as you might heap as many toppling oranges, with a crazy wooden veranda impending over the water,” — a tavern of dropsical appearance. which had not a straight floor in its whole constitution, and hardly a straight line. I got at the entrance on the land side after a search among puzzling alleys, and there I found still stronger reminders of “*Our Mutual Friend*.” Stuck against the wall was an array of old and new

handbills, headed **DROWNED**, and offering rewards for the recovery of bodies. The value set upon dead persons in Limehouse Hole is not excessive: the customary recompense for finding them seems to be ten shillings, and in only one instance did the price reach the dazzling amount of one pound. By the side of the house is an approach to the river: most of the buildings near are old and irregular, and at low tide a great deal of the shore must be exposed. Giving upon the slippery stones, beside which lay a few idle and rickety boats, I found the expected range of windows with "red curtains matching the noses of the regular customers." I looked in at the door. A long passage opened a vista of pleasant bar-parlor, or whatever it may have been, on the river-side; and perhaps I should have seen Miss Abbey Potterson if I had gone to the end. Several waterside characters were drinking beer at the lead-covered counter, waited upon by a sharp

young woman, who seems to have replaced Bob Gliddery. Instead of the little room called "Cosy" where the Police Inspector drank burnt sherry with Lightwood and Wrayburn, there was an apartment labelled "The Club." A party of "regular customers," all evidently connected with water (or mud), sat around a table: beyond question they were Tootle, and Mullins, and Bob Glamour, and Captain Joey; and at ten o'clock Miss Abbey would issue from the bar-parlor, and send them home. If The Six Jolly Fellowship Porters is still extant, this must be the house.



VII.

THE JEWISH QUARTER.

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VII.

THE JEWISH QUARTER.

THE haunts of Fagin were swept away long ago ; but we can trace in London streets the footsteps of a scarcely less interesting Hebrew,—I mean Old Riah, the venerable Jew of “Our Mutual Friend.” Anybody who will follow the Thames for a quarter of a mile above the Houses of Parliament may easily find, near Lambeth Bridge, the home of Jenny Wren, the doll’s dressmaker, at which Old Riah was a favorite visitor. The little blind square called Smith Square, the ugly church in the middle of it, with four little corner-towers, like some petrified animal lying on its back with its four legs in the air, the row of poor and


quiet houses where Church Street joins the square, the marks of neglect and stagnation about the neighborhood,—all these things are unchanged. Dickens was an indefatigable pedestrian, and he made his characters take tremendous walks. Old Riah trudged three miles one evening to reach Jenny Wren's house, and then he turned about and walked with the lame child to The Six Jolly Fellowship Porters, a distance of nearly six miles more, through the most difficult streets.

The home of Riah was in the City, on the edge of the Jewish quarter of Houndsditch. It was in St. Mary Axe, a dull and narrow street where the fog was thicker and blacker than in any other part of London. A transition street, which leads from the substantial city merchants to the old-clothes dealers, its character seems to be as ill-defined as its location; and I fancied that in a general way it suggested bill-discounters. I saw here

several grimy houses, with nondescript counting-rooms on the ground-floor, any one of which may have been the pattern of the establishment of "Pubsey & Co.," where Fascination Fledgeby exercised his peculiar talent for business, and Riah made for Jenny Wren and Lizzie Hexam a garden on the roof. Going eastward from Leadenhall Street through St. Mary Axe, we find, just before reaching Houndsditch, a short and dingy passage called Bevis Marks. Here lived Sampson Brass; and at the end of the passage, crowded and put out of countenance by modern places of business, there are some old houses, looking, I doubt not, very much as they did when Sampson and his sister Sally occupied one of them, and the Marchioness and Dick Swiveller played cards in the back-kitchen.

One bright Sunday I passed this way to see Rag Fair. On the east side of Houndsditch, almost opposite St. Mary Axe, is a

shallow flagged court, much wider than such places commonly are at this crowded end of London; and here lies the entrance to one of the most remarkable scenes in the metropolis. The solemn quiet of the business quarter began to be disturbed as I approached Houndsditch, — once a trench into which they cast dead dogs, and now a region of very lively Hebrew shopkeepers, — by street cries, and the babble of many voices, and the bustle of a moving crowd. The whole population was abroad. Young men with prominent features and conspicuous satin cravats were letting themselves out of the closed warehouses and hurrying off to suburban paradises on the Thames for a day's outing. Corpulent dames in loose calico wrappers, and with hair carefully plastered about their temples, were gossiping on the sidewalk. Young women of the florid style displayed their charms for the benefit of casual clerks from Bishopsgate and



loungers from Whitechapel. At the corners of the court I have mentioned, there was a brilliant display of cheap carpeting disposed like banners, chairs and sofas hung high in air, hearth-rugs fluttering in the breeze, and red cotton pocket-handkerchiefs spanning the roadway in flaming festoons. The movement of the crowd tended toward this spot; and I soon found myself swept into the current.

At the bottom of the court appeared a flight of three or four stone steps, leading up to a wide, low, and dingy structure, looking like a compromise between a cheap market-house and a country railway-station. Across the front was the inscription, "Phil's Buildings: Clothes and General Mart;" and at one side was a sign-board intimating that the public could find rest and refreshment at the neighboring Montefiore Arms. It is through Phil's Buildings that you enter Rag Fair.

It is said that on a good Sunday you may see here, in a network of houses, lanes, and alleys, no less than three miles of old clothes. I dare say that is true ; but, although I spent a great deal of time in Rag Fair, I confess that I never had the courage to go to the end of it. I found the first building fitted up with rough counters, shelves, racks, and trays, for the accommodation of various classes of dealers. Hundreds of calico dresses dangled from aloft, at first sight giving the impression that about an acre of the loveliest of Houndsditch had simultaneously committed suicide. Men's coats and trousers were heaped upon planks laid across trestles. A mountain of old hats rose in one corner ; and in another a voluble young Hebrew, with a brush and a bottle of blacking, was working, as if for dear life, to give a presentable appearance to a load of dreadful old shoes, snatched, one would say, from the gutters and dustbins. Here, however, was only the begin-

ning of the Fair. The building has several faces, opening into courts and alleys, all crammed with cast-off apparel; and these communicate with other sheds like the first. Over their fronts is painted, in large letters, "Entrance to the Exhibition: Clothes Exchange." One portion of the mart is devoted to a somewhat fresher class of wares; cheap trinkets, the poorest sort of imitation jewelry, the most gorgeous of colored handkerchiefs, and so many pairs of suspenders that it would seem to be a habit in Houndsditch to have all trousers made too big in the waist. The articles displayed in this quarter being, so to speak, new, and consequently ratable at some certain commercial value, were not in great request; for the frequenters of Rag Fair love the excitement of desperate and protracted bargaining,—an intellectual exercise only to be enjoyed in its perfection when there are no means of determining what the goods in dispute are worth, or

whether they are worth any thing at all. The advent of a possible customer threw the whole shed into commotion. A young lady with very heavy eyebrows and red cheeks, who stood in a bower of prismatic handkerchiefs, addressed me in the tone of Jenny Wren addressing Fascination Fledgeby. "Good-morning, this morning, young man," she said; then, as I did not yield to soft persuasion, two muscular mothers in Israel tried sterner means, and seizing me, one by the coat-tail, the other by the arm, began to pull with all their might. I owed my escape, after a short but severe struggle, to the lucky accident of divided counsels among the adversary; for, while one tried to drag me into shilling cravats, the other put forth her strength on behalf of red stockings, and between them I got away, and fell into the arms of a male dealer in suspenders. "Buy 'em," shouted the man fiercely, shaking a bundle of them in my face: "why

don't you buy 'em? You aren't frightened of 'em, are you?" A shirt, a military jacket, and a pair of red plush small-clothes were in turn commended to my attention, as the very things I appeared to need.

The most remarkable part of Rag Fair is not the "Clothes Exchange" proper, which is held under roofs, but the much more extensive, crowded, and bewildering mart in the adjoining streets and lanes. Petticoat Lane, which lends its name to the whole Fair, is called Middlesex Street on recent official maps; but it retains its old designation in common use. This is the centre of the Sunday traffic. Gravel Court, Sandys Row, Tripe Yard, Fryingpan Alley, Partridge Court, are some of the other passages, foul and narrow, which are given up to this curious business. Nearly all the transactions are conducted in the dirty open street; but there are many small shops besides, incredibly black and vile, in whose dark recesses com-

modities of some humble sort are kept for sale — I certainly cannot say are exhibited. Wherever the court is wide enough, an untidy Jewess sits on the ground amidst heaps of goods. A piece of sail-cloth, or a fragment of an old awning, being spread upon the muddy cobble-stones, becomes the sole substitute for shop and counter. One dame I saw surrounded by odd stockings, which she was clamorously offering to the public at the rate of “two pair the bob;” another was displaying on the cloth around her a variety of much-worn dresses, of coarse quality but showy pattern, which may have done duty in a music-hall of the lowest class; a third was debating with possible purchasers the value of sundry second-hand chemises; and a fourth had barricaded herself within a double circle of shoes and gaiters, mostly cracked at the sides, trodden at the heels, leaky at the soles, and infirm as to fastenings, but all newly polished. In the piles

of men's clothing, there were scarlet uniform coats (shed perhaps by deserters), and livery suits, and flowered cretonne waistcoats such as are worn by negro minstrels. Buyers were not lacking; and I had not long to wait before witnessing the full operation of the system of "Clothes Exchange." Workingmen, after animated negotiation, took off ragged and dirty coats, and put on others a little better. A cripple rested on his crutches, and effected an exchange of one old shoe.

Underclothing, as a rule, seemed to have been submitted to a rude sort of doing-up: a heap of shirts, offered at eightpence apiece, had perhaps been through a mangle, though it was long since they had seen a wash-tub; but there was about a barrel-full of soiled and crumpled collars just as they had come from the necks of the last wearers. I do not think the buyers were particular. They were exclusively the very poor, but by no means exclusively Israelites. Toward noon

the alleys became so closely packed, from house-wall to house-wall, that movement was at times almost impossible, and the matrons encamped in the roadway were in immediate danger of being trampled upon. Here was to be seen the traditional old-clothes-man of novels and picture-books, a grim person, with long skirts and gray beard, and a bag on his back. Here were to be seen dealers, not only in old clothes, but in every variety of article, which, having been used once, might possibly still serve another turn. A basket was filled with second-hand sponges—which can hardly have been nice. On walls and fences hung the most amazing collections of old leather straps, relics of abandoned trunks, and fragments of rotten harness. There were scraps of leather; there were bushels of rusty keys; there were stray door-knobs, and odd furniture-casters, and broken hammer-heads, and all the litter of brass and iron rubbish which is usually found in the bottoms of tool-boxes.

There were trays full of old spectacle-cases. There was a clothes-basket containing an armful of ancient kid and leather gloves, mostly not mated. A young man devoted himself entirely to the sale of ends of twine, done up in hanks at a halfpenny a bunch. Artisans' tools of all kinds, in every stage of dilapidation, were great articles of trade; and thriftless workmen who had secured a job for Monday morning came here to supply themselves with such poor implements as they had the pence to buy.

With the noise of bargaining and disputing mingled the uproar of the venders of drinks and delicacies and nostrums, and scores of useless conveniences. "Now then, gents," shouted a seller of sarsaparilla-wine, "this is the true elixir of life, recommended by the entire medical faculty of Great Britain, without exception." "Penny a pot! penny a pot!" screamed a parrot-like young Hebrew with a basket of nuts. "Hokey-pokey, a

penny!" roared a very large man, taking from an ice-cream freezer a little square of something which looked like a slice of white castile soap. "I'm the only party breathing that's got these goods," exclaimed a dealer in something utterly undesirable, I have forgotten now what it was. A young man, in the uniform of the French infantry of the line, mounted a chair, and announced himself, by means of a placard, as "the Parisian Electric Light Company," his stock in trade being cigar-lights and penny needle-cases. A lively person who was endeavoring to dispose of a barrow-full of hammers at twopence each, drove a purely imaginary but tremendous trade with speechless and invisible buyers: "You take this one at tuppence; thank you, sir. Here you are. Now, then, gents, who's for the next at tuppence, only TWO PENCE? They're a-going fast!" He never looked at anybody in particular; he never parted with any of his

goods; he never took in any money, and he always held up the same hammer; and I rather thought that the nonchalance with which he omitted to pretend to believe that anybody believed in his little fiction was the drollest thing in the Fair. There was another young man who stood on a table with a vial of water in his hand. "I will now proceed," said he, "to fill a bottle, and distribute its contents among you;" whereupon he poured the water from one vial into another, and without further ceremony calmly went on with an irrelevant and perfectly incomprehensible harangue. I was his only auditor; and he fortunately did not consider it worth while to distribute the contents of his bottle to me; but later he collected a crowd, and when I passed that way again he was hard at work with his vial of water and sundry essences, manufacturing spurious ponies of rum and brandy. More varieties of mussels and other unpleasant-

looking shell-fish were exposed for sale than I imagined all the British waters contained; and the quantity of these viands consumed in Rag Fair seemed to be beyond computation. Whole alleys were full of them, displayed on costermongers' barrows. The shell being previously removed, the flabby edible and its juice were generally kept in a wash-basin, whence the vender ladled out penny-worths with his dirty hand, and served them on small earthenware plates or bits of broken china. What with dripping shell-fish and bouncing ginger-beer, the alleys were everywhere slippery.

The uproar was at its height when I turned into a comparatively quiet court to escape the confusion. It was one of a series of connected yards, just on the margin of the Fair, shut in by squalid tenements, and communicating with Houndsditch by narrow and crooked passages. Children were swarming about the horrible pools, mingled overflow of

the kitchen and washtub, which festered in the hollows of the pavement; and a few feeble women sat listless in the doorways, keeping house, while the able-bodied members of the family were busy at the Fair. These, and such as these, were the homes of the merchants of Petticoat Lane, — only a few rods from the Bank of England; and yet when I came out into the Sunday stillness and decorous solidity of Leadenhall Street I felt as if I had just got back from a very particularly dirty and degraded foreign country.

A BOAT-VOYAGE ON THE WYE.




A BOAT-VOYAGE ON THE WYE.

THE American tourist who lands at Liverpool, hurries through the Rows at Chester, does Stratford, Warwick, and Kenilworth in the remnant of a day, and then rushes up to London, little thinks that the railway is whisking him away from one of the most beautiful regions in the island of Britain. The scenery of the Wye has an old renown; and yet, although it lies only a little to the westward of the ordinary route from the Mersey to the Thames, few travellers from our country know any thing of its enchanting prospects. In the summer season the railway companies advertise cheap rates for the "Tour of the Wye;" and I dare say their

excursion tickets are worth what they cost, although it must be confessed that the frequency with which the train plunges into the bowels of the mountains, and runs through long tunnels, at the most picturesque points of the road, is apt to interfere with the traveller's enjoyment. The proper way to make the descent of the Wye is in a row-boat. This conveyance may be taken at Hereford, whence you can float to the Bristol Channel in two easy days.

Hereford is a shabby and untidy little city ; and its ancient cathedral, most villanously restored, is not one of the best in England. Nevertheless, some hours can be well spent in viewing the vaulted aisles, and mutilated shrines, and the ruins of chapter-house and cloisters ; in wondering that a rude and ignorant age should have reared such superb works, and a more advanced age should have battered and destroyed them ; in lounging about the streets where antique houses with



timbered and carved fronts still look neat and sturdy; and then, after passing through a dirty lane where Nell Gwynne was born, and a tangle of squalid courts and alleys where the name of that celebrity is affectionately displayed upon gates and corners, you will come to a bridge over the Wye, and see before you a soft landscape. On the left hand, a smooth lawn slopes to the water's edge, from a brilliant and tree-fringed garden, and over the foliage appear the gables and chimneys of the Episcopal Palace. On the right, near a row of pretty cottages, are the boats waiting for customers, and I am afraid not getting many. Indeed, for twenty or twenty-five miles below Hereford, the aspect of the banks—low meadows, through which the stream twists itself with many a crook and backward bend—is somewhat monotonous; and it is better to take the railway as far as Ross, and begin the voyage there.

Mounting the steep slope upon which the little town of Ross has disposed itself, and passing around the curious old building in the market-place, — a town-hall raised aloft upon worn pillars of red sandstone, and offering shelter under its arches to the venders of poultry, pease, and gooseberries, — you will find standing side by side on the main street, a bookseller's shop and a chemist's shop, each purporting to be the veritable dwelling of John Kyrle, celebrated in the third of Pope's "Moral Essays" as the "Man of Ross."

"But all our praises why should lords engross?
Rise, honest Muse! and sing the MAN OF ROSS;
Pleas'd Vaga echoes through her winding bounds,
And rapid Severn hoarse applause resounds."

In this case both claimants are equally in the right; for the two shops were originally one house, and it was there that John Kyrle passed some of the most fruitful years of his

remarkable life. He was not rich ; but out of a meagre income he saved enough to make great benefactions to the public, not by the posthumous and easy charity of a will, but while he was alive and had use for money : and his memory is held in especial reverence because his generosity was so highly ennobled by self-sacrifice. His name still fills the town. At the top of the hill is the public recreation ground which he planted for the benefit of his native place ; and next to it is the pretty stone church, beautified by his liberality, and hallowed by his remains. Tombs and statues, more stately than one would have looked for in such a little town, are placed thick around the chancel ; and in the midst of them rise two living trees, — tall and thrifty elms, which have thrust themselves through the pavement, and grown up inside the church until they nearly touch the roof. The townspeople regard them with affection, because they are said to be shoots

from an avenue (no longer existing) which John Kyrle planted in the churchyard. They stand just within one of the windows. It was a bright and quiet Sunday afternoon when I sat in the deserted church to look at this pretty spectacle. The casement was open; the branches were dancing in the wind; the light played with the foliage, and strange shadows fell upon the effigies of departed knights and dames stretched upon their gray stone monuments, and the life-size figure of a cavalier standing erect, a few feet from the wall, with his hand upon his shield. A broken cross in the churchyard bears the significant inscription: "Plague. Ano. Domi., 1637. Burials 315. Libera nos., Domine." A gravestone is "Sacred to the memory of Margaret, the wife of William Watkins, late chaise-driver at the Swan Inn in this town," — from which we may infer that Mr. Watkins took pride in his profession. Another Watkins exclaims, posthumously, —

“Farewell, vain world, I have seen enough of the,
Now I am careless what you says of me;
Your smiles I court not nor frowns I fear!
My cares are past my head lies quiet hear,” —

with more of the same sort. But the favorite epitaph in Ross appears to have been the familiar stanza, “Affliction sore long time I bore,” which is repeated several times.

The Royal Hotel at Ross stands in a garden, on the edge of a precipitous hill, so set about with walls, turrets, battlements, and terraces, that if the masonry were not obviously fresh you might suppose it to occupy the site of some half-demolished stronghold. But the stone-work is intended chiefly to strengthen the scarp of the cliff, down which the road runs headlong to the river; and it has been finished off with a little military flourish, merely for the sake of appearances. Looking over a low, vine-covered parapet, from the pleasant piazza of the hotel, you see the shady road below, then a stretch of

green bottom land, heights again in the distance, and the tortuous Wye hurrying through the alluvial valley. From this point the windings of the river can be descried for several miles. At Ross it makes an enormous horse-shoe bend around one of the most beautiful hayfields imaginable, — a vast expanse of perfectly smooth meadow, dotted with a few oaks, one of which is supposed to be a thousand years old. Not more than half a mile away, on the opposite bank, is the picturesque little hamlet of Wilton. In full view of the hotel are the ivy-clad remains of Wilton Castle, built in the reign of Stephen, and for many generations the residence of the Lords Grey de Wilton, but a ruin now for more than two hundred years. There is a fine stone bridge of the time of Elizabeth, with curious sharp bastions between the five arches; and on the bridge stands a tall sun-dial bearing a monition whose wisdom may excuse its syntax: —

“Esteem thy precious time,
Which pass so quick away;
Prepare then for eternity,
And do not make delay.”

We spent several days at Ross, too much charmed with the place to leave it. At last the Ross volunteer corps, getting ready for the annual encampment, began marching about the streets to the tune of “Grandfather’s Clock;” and we bade the boatman be in readiness for the next morning. There were two of us passengers, luxuriously accommodated at the stern; while the luggage was piled amidships, and a good-natured Englishman forward united in his own person (like a more distinguished navigator) “the midshipmite and the bo’sun tight, and the crew of the captain’s gig.” As we swept into the rapid current, the line of red-coats might have been seen in the distance marching toward the camp, and the strains of “Grandfather’s Clock” still floated over the fields.


From Ross to the Severn, the Wye has a nearly uniform width of about fifty yards. It is a swift river, vexed here and there with rapids; and the task of the oarsman is rather to keep in the true channel than to spend strength in pulling. The return is so much more difficult than the descent, that the boats are generally carted back the greater part of the way. Leaving the hills of Ross, we floated for a while between broad and pleasant meadows. A week of delicious weather had succeeded a month of incessant rain, and with the generous warmth and sunshine the whole country seemed to wake to joyous life. The haymakers were busy at their long-deferred task. The air was loaded with fragrance, and musical with the song of birds, the swish of the scythe, and the distant slumberous sound of mowing-machines. The contented kine stood belly-deep in the river under the willows. The foliage, though it was past midsummer,

was as brilliant and fresh as we see it at home in early June; and the tender green of the wheat-fields was speckled with millions of scarlet poppies. Fleecy clouds tempered the rays of the sun. Over the whole smiling landscape, hung the pale soft haze which belongs to the English summer.

There is nothing in America comparable to these delicate rustic scenes. With us the thrifty farmer strips his acres bare of trees, divides the small fields with hideous rail-fences, and leaves the scarred hillsides to parch and brown in the August heats. There is a cruel glare upon the shadeless roads. The horses' feet sink deep in the fine dust; the hot cloud which rises behind the passing buggy settles down over the dirty grass and disfigured bushes of the wayside. Man—I mean the American man—meddles with the natural beauty of the country, only to spoil it; and there is often something indescribably harsh in the rural

scenery, even of the oldest and best-cultivated parts of the States, such, for instance, as the neat and thriving towns of New England. In Old England nature has been treated with a much gentler and more careful hand. Almost everywhere, in this part of the island, the corn-fields and pastures are adorned with clusters of superb trees, the close hedgerows are neatly trimmed, the smooth macadamized highways are shaded like a private avenue, a broad foot-path runs beside the road, brick and stone walls are hung with ivy, and the laborer's cottage is bowered in roses. You might walk all day on an English country road, and fancy you were strolling through a nobleman's estate.


A few miles below Ross the river makes a sharp turn ; the right bank suddenly becomes high and precipitous ; and among the trees, which cover the hills from the waterside to the summit, appear the towers and battlements of a dark stone castle. This is Good-



rich Court, — not a relic of feudal times, but a modern copy of the military architecture of the fourteenth century, — a freak of the late distinguished antiquary, Sir Samuel Rush Meyrick, in whose lifetime the Court contained an unrivalled collection of ancient armor. But only a little way below Goodrich Court, on the point of a difficult cliff, stand the picturesque remains of Goodrich Castle, older, it is said, than the Norman Conquest, and still showing in the keep a portion of the Saxon walls.

You may land here, and climb to the ruins; and, after you have paid a sixpence to a tidy and handsome old woman who keeps the gate, you may roam at will over the grassy interior. A good part of the masonry is yet strong; the fine arched gateway of the principal entrance is almost entire; the ground-plan is easily traced in its completeness; and the disposition of many of the upper rooms is sufficiently indicated by the remains of

walls, and the corbels and beam-holes. The castle, indeed, never fell into decay; but it was dismantled during the Civil War, after it had resisted the Parliamentary forces for nearly six weeks. It was almost the last stronghold of the Cavaliers. It is rather surprising to find how ample was the number of the dungeons, some of which may still be explored: but there was a reason for these subterranean accommodations; for we read that Lord Talbot, who owned the castle in the fourteenth century, "obtained a license from King Edward III. to have a prison here," and he earned a very pretty income by squeezing ransoms out of his French captives. It is not of knights and of sieges, however, that we think the most as we sit under the great trees which have grown up in the ruins; for it was here, in the courtyard of Goodrich Castle, that Wordsworth met the little girl whose artless answers are commemorated in the poem "*We are Seven.*"



One of the greatest charms of the river scenery for the next few miles lies in the sudden and frequent change from the rugged to the soft. As we passed Goodrich we seemed to be about running ashore at the foot of a long and steep ridge, which raised itself high across our course. The slope — if any thing so steep can be called a slope — disclosed a beautiful alternation of forest and orchard, tilled fields, meadows, and trim gardens; and dotted over the landscape were the cottages of a little hamlet. A bend in the river, not visible until we were close upon it, brought us around the point of the ridge and into the midst of rough and lofty rocks, which reminded me a little of the Palisades of the Hudson. There is a precipitous height called Symond's Yat, where the stream describes an elongated horse-shoe of about four miles in order to get around a promontory which is only three-quarters of a mile across; and here it is customary for the able-

bodied tourist to scale the hill, and meet his boat on the other side. A panorama of surprising extent and fairness rewards the labor.

We rested for an hour at a little waterside inn, lunching on bread and cheese and home-brewed ale; and in an hour more, after shooting through a rocky pass, crossing a deep mountain pool, skirting the great forest of Dean, floating under the shadow of groves of firs, and below rude cliffs, where legends placed King Arthur's Cave, we came to the opening of the Valley of the Monnow on the right; and there, in the cleft of the river, nestles the compact little town of Monmouth.

There is not much to detain the tourist in this ancient place, where John of Gaunt had his favorite residence, and Henry V. was born, and where Capt. Fluellen doubtless discoursed of "the disciplines of the Roman wars, look you." Most of its historic relics have disappeared, and the modern town is

not attractive. There is a mighty hill on the other side of the river, where a promenade has been laid out, and a "naval temple" erected to the honor of the "noble British Admirals" who have served their country in various realms and ages. Monmouth is almost Welsh; and there is surely a touch of Welsh pride in this dedication, which leaves for more plebeian towns to celebrate the prowess of the British admirals who were not nobles, and the noble sailors who were less than admirals.

The voyage lasted until late in the afternoon, and there was some novel delight at every turn. On a round hill near the bank stood a tall May-pole, where the time-honored merry-making (which an act of Parliament once declared, apropos of the May-pole in the Strand, to be "a last relic of vile heathenism") is still annually observed. A few paces from the opposite bank, half hidden in vines and trees, we saw the prettiest imagina-

ble Gothic cottage in the most alluring of landscapes. I forget whether there were roses clambering over the walls, but it seems to me that the whole place was full of sweet scent and brilliant color. Men and women were tossing the hay in a strip of meadow between the house and the river. A lady was walking among them, while several dogs frisked around her. As our boat floated from under the trees, a comical Scotch terrier—surely the busiest body in all the land about—detached himself from the group, and came down to the brink in high excitement to examine and report. The examination was conducted with one ear erect, a foot lifted, and a fragment of red tongue exhibited at the corner of the mouth: the report to headquarters was then made in great haste and with evidences of entire self-approval. The banks became more mountainous, the course of the river more tortuous than ever. Instead of the boats of the salmon-fishers, which we

had passed from time to time all day, we began to meet occasional stranded coal-sloops; and the appearance of a streak of mud along the shore gave notice of tide-water. A little while before sunset we entered a wide amphitheatre; and there, on a plateau about twenty feet above the stream, was Tintern Abbey.

We stepped ashore at a little causeway behind a little cluster of cottages, and walked to a little stone inn which faces the abbey church. Hung with ivy, and set in a rose-garden, it is one of the most fascinating hostelries that ever welcomed a traveller. Perhaps at that moment it offered rather less quiet and comfort than one might have wished; for a very hungry excursion-party, whose vans were waiting in the stable-yard, swarmed all over it, while another party occupied the ruins. In this latter band, there was an old lady apparently much depressed by the iniquities of popery; and, as she poked into cell and sacristy, her head

shook incessantly in disapproval of the whole monastic system. I think she was looking for dungeons. At last she called her husband, and with evident agitation pointed to a little recess; having looked at which, the pair walked straight out of the abbey, and came back no more. I went to see what they had found. It was a closet, furnished with a contemporary iron gate, of the area-railing pattern; and the gardener uses it for locking up his wheelbarrow.


When the vans had rolled away, we had the inn and the ruins to ourselves. We ate a cosey dinner by the open window, where the flowers were nodding to us; we climbed a hill to look at the magnificent windows of the abbey in the fading sunset; and we slept in a pleasant upper chamber whence a daintily bowered staircase on the outside of the house led down into the garden. The early morning found us again under the *arches* of the church; and before visitors

began to arrive we had taken leave of the cheerful landlady, and resumed our journey.

I shall not attempt to describe Tintern, which so many have described before me. The beauty of the abbey church is not only in the splendor of its architecture, and the solidity of the noble walls which stand almost entire after a lapse of more than seven hundred years: to understand the effect which this ruin excites, we must take into account the beautiful background against which the picture is displayed, the wooded hills around, the wide grassy platform, the swift river a few paces away. The student of architecture sets a high value upon the well-preserved remains, which exhibit so much of the best work of the twelfth century; the antiquary is deeply interested in tracing the plan of the monastic buildings. We can see the line of the cloisters and the scriptorium, the chapter-house beside the church, the sacristy close to the

high altar, the monks' refectory with one window opening into the almonry and another into the kitchen, and the noble hall, with a row of columns down the centre, where travellers were hospitably entertained. A gateway is standing, through whose broad arches led the main entrance from the river; and over it are the remains of some rooms which may have been the cells of the brethren. There are very few old abbeys in England whose internal arrangements can be so clearly discerned. Even the names of buried abbots may be read on the pavements of the cloisters. Deep in the forest, and yet midway on the route between the two important fortresses of Monmouth and Chepstow, the solitude of Tintern must often have been broken by the passing of military pageants, and belated knights clattering at the gates must have disturbed the chant in the choir.

From Tintern to the estuary of the Severn, the Wye is a river of enormous tides, and



consequently of slimy and unlovely borders. The conclusion of the journey was made by carriage, a delightful drive of little more than an hour, along romantic roads carried up the side of the steep river-hills to a height of about five hundred feet. There is a walk across a culminating ridge called the Wynd-cliff, about two hundred feet higher. At the top a surprise awaits you. For you seemed to be in the solitude of a remote forest; but from the summit a view suddenly opens across the tops of the opposite hills, and there is the Severn running parallel with the Wye, only two or three miles away, and steamers are puffing on its broad waters. Chepstow is visible near the junction of the two streams. There, after a visit to the huge eleventh-century castle, the traveller will betake himself once more to railways and other modern discomforts.





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